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x-Socio 2 B&P**The Brave Moment**By JULY, by Constantine
Norton. 285 pages. Norton.

At 12:37 p.m. on the day of the assassination attempt, Count Claus Stauffenberg, a German officer, was in the Führer's East Prussian headquarters at Rastenburg. A few minutes later Stauffenberg escaped from the conference room, observed from the conference room. The brief case, as the world now knows, contained about a pound of British plastic explosive which had been obtained from the Abwehr, the German counterintelligence service. At 12:42 the bomb exploded. Stauffenberg, who had

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lost his right hand and his left eye in Tunisia, watched the blast which collapsed part of the roof. He entered a staff car, drove off to the airport, and boarded a plane which was waiting. He was convinced that Hitler was dead.

Hitler, of course, was only slightly wounded. But for more than two hours, Stauffenberg, the key figure in the elaborate plans which had been drawn up to supplant the Nazi rulers of Germany, was out of touch with Berlin. These were the critical hours. Behind were almost ten years of planning and half a dozen abortive attempts on Hitler's life. The conspiracy ran through every level of the German forces and also included many civilians who still had the spirit to resist the ubiquitous disease of Nazism.

Aftermath: During the confused hours after the assassination attempt, the complex plan which was to be triggered by the code word Valkyrie was set in motion. For a few hours, Berlin was in the hands of the rebels; in Paris, most of the senior SS officers were arrested by regular army troops. Throughout the Third Reich sporadic action was taken to isolate the Nazi strength. But by 9 o'clock that evening the German radio announced with dismal monotony that Hitler was alive; that he would speak to the German people later in the evening. By that time the plot had failed.

If Hitler had been killed; if the conspirators had acted with more resolution; if Stauffenberg had not been wounded in the chest; if the Allies had only given the conspirators some concrete encouragement; if, if...

These are the afterthoughts of Constantine FitzGibbon, who has written this detailed and moving account of the abortive plot against Hitler. He contends that the world has been saddled with a distorted version of this incident, fabricated by the Nazis during the hysterical last year of their rule. The incidents of July 20 were not, as Hitler would have it, perpetrated by "a very small clique of ambitious officers, devoid of conscience," but the final protest of the "spiritual elite" of Germany. Had it succeeded, the history of Western Europe might well have been different.

Summing Up: A memorable tribute to a brave failure.